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COMMITTEE ON CONFERENCES
Organizational session for 1996
1 February 1996

ANNOTATED PROVISIONAL AGENDA FOR THE ORGANIZATIONAL SESSION FOR 1996

1. Election of officers.

2. Adoption of the agenda.

3. Organization of work for 1996.

4. Programme of work for 1996.

5. Other business.

ANNOTATIONS

1. Election of officers

Rule 103 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly provides that committees other than Main Committees shall elect a Chairman, one or more Vice-Chairmen and a Rapporteur. These officers shall be elected on the basis of equitable geographical distribution, experience and personal competence.

In past years, the Committee on Conferences has elected, in addition to the Chairman, three Vice-Chairmen and a Rapporteur.

At its organizational session for 1989, on 1 March 1989, the Committee agreed in principle that henceforth the chairmanship would rotate annually among the regional groups.

2. Adoption of the agenda

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3. Organization of work for 1996

At its 341st meeting, on 27 August 1992, the Committee on Conferences decided to maintain its biennial programme of work, dealing with items relating to documentation in even-numbered years and those relating to meetings in odd-numbered years. The Committee also decided that some items would be considered on an annual basis.

At its organizational session for 1995, on 23 March 1995, the Committee adopted its agenda for 1995 and requested the Secretariat to submit a draft agenda for 1996 to the Committee at its organizational session for 1996.

In paragraph 4 of its resolution 46/190 A of 20 December 1991, the General Assembly took note of the guidelines adopted by the Committee on Conferences with regard to inter-sessional departures from the approved calendar of conferences and meetings. 1/ At its substantive session of 1994, the Committee decided that requests for inter-sessional departures submitted to the Committee should, in future, be reviewed by the Bureau, in consultation with the Secretariat, for subsequent action. At its substantive session of 1995, the Committee decided that requests for inter-sessional departures submitted to the Committee that involved a change of venue should be referred to the members for approval. Departures that involved other types of changes should, as the Committee had decided at its substantive session of 1994, be reviewed by the Bureau, in consultation with the Secretariat, for subsequent action.

Moreover, meetings of the Committee may be required in compliance with paragraph 6 of General Assembly resolution 35/10 A of 3 November 1980, by which the proposals affecting the schedule of conferences and meetings made during sessions of the Assembly shall be reviewed by the Committee when administrative implications are being considered under the requirements of rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the Assembly.

4. Programme of work for 1996

The terms of reference of the Committee are set forth in paragraph 4 of General Assembly resolution 43/222 B of 21 December 1988. As noted above, the Committee adopted its agenda for 1995 at its organizational session for 1995 and requested the Secretariat to present a draft agenda for 1996 to the Committee at its organizational session for 1996.

Annexed to the present document is the draft agenda for 1996, followed by annotations, which takes into account the earlier decisions of the Committee and subsequent decisions and resolutions of the General Assembly. The Committee may also wish to determine the timing and duration of its substantive session of 1996 and to specify the documentation requirements.

5. Other business

Notes

1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 32 (A/46/32 and Corr.1 and Add.1), para. 77.

ANNEX

Draft agenda for the substantive session of 1996

1. Adoption of the agenda.

2. Calendar of conferences and meetings:

   (a) Adoption of the draft revised calendar of conferences and meetings for 1997;

   (b) Improved utilization of conference-servicing resources:

      (i) Meeting statistics of United Nations organs;

      (ii) Consultations with bodies concerning utilization of the conference services available to them;

      (iii) Provision of interpretation services to meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States;

      (iv) Cost-accounting system for conference services;

   (c) Requests for exceptions to section I, paragraph 7, of General Assembly resolution 40/243.

3. Control and limitation of documentation:

   (a) Implementation of General Assembly resolution 50/206 C;

   (b) Provision of written meeting records to subsidiary organs of the General Assembly;

   (c) Implementation of the rules and regulations on control and limitation of documentation: compliance with, and review of, the 24- and 32-page limits for documentation;

   (d) Format of reports of subsidiary bodies;

   (e) Access to the optical disk system by developing countries;

   (f) Translation-related matters.

4. United Nations publications policy: implementation of General Assembly resolution 43/222 B, paragraph 4 (h).

5. Review of the programme performance of the United Nations for the biennium 1994-1995: section 25E, Conference services.

6. Adoption of the report.

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Annotations

1. Adoption of the agenda

2. Calendar of conferences and meetings:

(a) Adoption of the draft revised calendar of conferences and meetings for 1997

The Committee on Conferences will submit to the General Assembly at its fifty-first session the draft revised calendar of conferences and meetings for 1997.

A draft revised calendar for 1997 will be submitted by the Secretariat to the Committee at its substantive session of 1996.

Moreover, in paragraph 18 of its resolution 46/190 of 20 December 1991, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to it at its forty-seventh session and as appropriate at subsequent sessions, through the Committee on Conferences and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, a consolidated statement relating to the number and costs of scheduled special conferences, bearing in mind the annual limit of five as set out in resolution 40/243 of 18 December 1985 and endorsed by the Assembly in its resolution 41/213 of 19 December 1986. As no special conferences are scheduled for 1997, a report on the matter will not be submitted to the Committee at its substantive session.

(b) Improved utilization of conference-servicing resources:

(i) Meeting statistics of United Nations organs

Since 1983, the Committee on Conferences has studied a series of reports showing the meeting statistics of a number of United Nations organs in New York, Geneva and Vienna. In accordance with paragraph 7 of General Assembly resolution 48/222 A of 23 December 1993, the information includes analyses of trends and figures on the utilization of conference-servicing capacity.

At its substantive session of 1994, the Committee requested the Secretariat to expand the core sample in the statistical analysis to include the Main Committees of the General Assembly and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions. It also requested the Secretariat to include figures on the capacity utilization of conference services (for interpretation and documentation) in New York, Geneva and Vienna. At its substantive session of 1995, the Committee requested the Secretariat to expand the core sample to include the Economic and Social Council and the Committee itself, and to refine the methodology for calculating utilization factors.

In compliance with the foregoing requests, the Secretariat will submit to the Committee at its substantive session of 1996 a report on meeting statistics of United Nations organs.

In addition, at its substantive session of 1994, the Committee on Conferences requested the Secretariat to submit to the General Assembly at its fiftieth session, through the Committee, a synoptic table by sector of meetings held during the bienniums 1992-1993 and 1994-1995 (using projections for the second half of 1995), including the notional cost of conference services provided, as well as a breakdown of meeting services and documentation costs.

At its substantive session of 1995, the Committee took note of the synoptic report and requested the Secretariat to refine the methodology used in drafting the report and to continue to provide such information to the Committee at its future sessions.

If the Committee so decides, submission of the requested table would be deferred until 1997 so as to enable the Secretariat to complete the data for 1995 and to provide actual data for 1996 and the first half of 1997 and projections for the second half of 1997.

(ii) Consultations with bodies concerning utilization of the conference services and facilities available to them

At its substantive session of 1995, the Committee requested its Chairman to consult on its behalf with the chairmen of bodies that had consistently utilized less than the applicable benchmark figure (75 per cent for calendar year 1993 and 80 per cent for calendar years 1994 and 1995) of their allocated resources for the past three sessions, with a view to making appropriate recommendations in order to achieve the optimum utilization of conference-servicing resources.

An oral report will be presented on the aforementioned consultations.

The Committee further requested its Chairman to transmit a letter to the chairmen of subsidiary bodies that had utilized less than 80 per cent of their conference resources in 1994 to invite them to report on measures taken to improve their utilization of conference-servicing resources and realistically to assess their need for such resources, with a view to reducing the conference resources requested.

The Secretariat will provide an oral report on the replies received from the chairmen of the subsidiary bodies concerned.

Moreover, the Committee requested Conference Services to maintain an active dialogue with the substantive secretariats of intergovernmental bodies, providing statistics and information on previous performance, as well as guidelines on the ways and means to enhance utilization of conference-servicing resources. Conference Services was requested to report on the outcome of that dialogue to the General Assembly at its fifty-first session, through the Committee.

In addition, in paragraph 9 of its resolution 50/206 A, the General Assembly requested the Secretariat to take the measures recommended by the Committee on Conferences to enhance utilization of conference-servicing resources and to report thereon to the Assembly at its fifty-first session, through the Committee.

The Secretariat will provide a written report on the matter.

Furthermore, in paragraph 11 of its resolution 50/206 A, the General Assembly requested the Chairman of the Committee on Conferences to hold consultations with various bodies and committees to ensure rational allocation and capacity utilization of all United Nations conference facilities at Headquarters, United Nations offices and other duty stations with a view to addressing the present imbalance in order to enhance the capacity utilization and cost-effectiveness of these facilities and to report to the Committee on the outcome of these consultations at its substantive session of 1996.

The Secretariat, in consultation with the Chairman of the Committee on Conferences, will present an oral report on the matter.

(iii) Provision of interpretation services to meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States

In paragraph 13 of its resolution 50/206 A, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to provide, within the resources approved for conference services in the biennium 1996-1997, interpretation services to meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States upon request by those groupings, taking into account the priority due to meetings included in the calendar of conferences and meetings, and to submit a report on the implementation of the decision to the Assembly at its fifty-first session, through the Committee on Conferences.

The Secretariat will present an oral report on the matter.

(iv) Cost-accounting system for conference services

At its substantive session of 1995, the Committee requested the Secretariat to develop as soon as possible a cost-accounting system for Conference Services, and requested the Secretariat to report on cost estimates of conferences, including estimates of losses incurred as a result of underutilization of conference-servicing resources.

Moreover, in paragraph 1 of its resolution 50/206 D, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to develop as soon as possible a comprehensive and accurate cost-accounting system for conference services, to report on the progress of its implementation to the Assembly through the Committee on Conferences and to report the results of its use to the Assembly through the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, in accordance with their respective mandates.

The Secretariat will present an oral report on the cost-accounting system.

(c) Requests for exceptions to section I, paragraph 7, of General Assembly resolution 40/243

In paragraph 15 of its resolution 47/202 A, the General Assembly demanded that all subsidiary organs of the Assembly comply with the provisions of section I, paragraph 7, of its resolution 40/243, by which it decided that no

subsidiary organ of the Assembly might meet at United Nations Headquarters during a regular session of the Assembly unless explicitly authorized by it.

In accordance with the procedure established by the Committee at its 1986 session, and reaffirmed at its 1992 session, chairmen of subsidiary organs of the General Assembly that wish to meet at Headquarters during regular sessions of the Assembly submit their requests to the Chairman of the Committee on Conferences.

A conference room paper will be prepared by the Secretariat so that the Committee may consider requests received in this regard.

3. Control and limitation of documentation:

(a) Implementation of General Assembly resolution 50/206 C

In paragraph 11 of its resolution 50/206 C, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to present to it at its fifty-first session, through the Committee on Conferences and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, a report on the implementation of the measures called for under the resolution, including information on possible savings.

The Secretariat will submit a comprehensive report on the matter, which will include separate reports on sub-items 3 (b) to (e) below.

(b) Provision of written meeting records to subsidiary organs of the General Assembly

In paragraph 3 of its resolution 50/206 B of 23 December 1995, the General Assembly took note of the intention of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space to replace its verbatim records by unedited transcripts, and requested the Committee to keep the Assembly informed, through the Committee on Conferences, of its experience regarding unedited transcripts. In addition, in paragraph 4, the Assembly took note of the decision of the Committee on Conferences contained in paragraph 75 of its report to the Assembly (Official Records of the General Assembly, Fiftieth Session, Supplement No. 32 (A/50/32 and Add.1 and 2)), and requested the Committee to report on the implementation of the decision to the Assembly at its fifty-first session.

The report on the matter will be contained in the comprehensive report on sub-item 3 (a).

(c) Implementation of the rules and regulations on control and limitation of documentation: compliance with, and review of, the 24- and 32-page limits for documentation

In paragraph 2 of its resolution 50/206 C, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to enforce, where appropriate, the existing page limits referred to in paragraph 1 of the resolution in respect of all documents originating in the Secretariat, to review those limits, where appropriate, with a view to achieving an overall reduction of documentation without affecting its

quality and to report thereon to the Assembly at its fifty-first session, through the Committee on Conferences.

The report on the matter will be contained in the comprehensive report on sub-item 3 (a).

(d) Format of reports of subsidiary bodies

In paragraph 9 (b) of its resolution 50/206 C, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to seek a more reader-friendly and uniform format of reports, taking into account new publishing technologies, that would include sections containing the objective of the report, an executive summary, the conclusions drawn and, as appropriate, the action proposed to be taken by the body, and to submit proposals thereon to the Assembly through the Committee on Conferences.

The report on the matter will be contained in the comprehensive report on sub-item 3 (a).

(e) Access to the optical disk system by developing countries

In paragraph 3 of its resolution 50/206 D, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to present proposals to the General Assembly at its fifty-first session through the Committee on Conferences on facilitating access to the optical disk system in all official languages by developing countries, taking into account the possible savings from reduced copying and distribution costs.

The report on the matter will be contained in the comprehensive report on sub-item 3 (a).

(f) Translation-related matters

At its substantive session of 1995, the Committee encouraged the Secretariat to enhance its efforts to keep translation-related costs low, as appropriate and whenever feasible, and to provide a report thereon.

Moreover, in paragraph 4 of its resolution 50/206 E, the General Assembly noted the actions taken to improve the quality of translation into all official languages, in particular the efforts of the Arabic Translation Service to implement the proposal contained in annex II to the report of the Committee on Conferences to the Assembly at its forty-ninth session (Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-ninth Session, Supplement No. 32 (A/49/32/Rev.1), annex II), requested the Secretary-General to undertake a thorough review of the terminology and technical methods used in translation into Arabic, and urged the Secretariat to speed up its efforts towards the implementation of phase II of that proposal and to report thereon to the Committee on Conferences at its substantive session of 1996.

The Secretariat will present an oral report on the foregoing translation-related matters.

4. United Nations publications policy: implementation of General Assembly resolution 43/222 B, paragraph 4 (h)

At its 335th meeting, on 24 August 1992, the Committee on Conferences reviewed a conference room paper that contained an annotated provisional outline of the report on publications policies called for in General Assembly resolution 46/185 B of 20 December 1991, section VI (A/AC.172/1992/CRP.1). At the same meeting, the Committee requested the Secretariat to proceed with the report on publications as outlined in the conference room paper, taking into account the views expressed during the discussion.

At its 346th meeting, on 17 May 1993, the Committee considered the draft report of the Secretary-General on United Nations publications policy (A/AC.172/153, annex). The Committee recommended that its comments and observations should be taken into account in the preparation of the final report of the Secretary-General on publications policy to be submitted to the General Assembly at its forty-eighth session.

The Committee may wish to defer further action on this item pending consideration by the General Assembly of the final report on publications policy (A/C.5/48/10), which was submitted to the Assembly at its forty-eighth session.

5. Review of the programme performance of the United Nations for the biennium 1994-1995: section 25E, Conference services

In resolution 39/238 of 18 December 1984, the General Assembly approved the recommendations of the Committee for Programme and Coordination (see Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-ninth Session, Supplement No. 38 (A/39/38)), including the recommendation that relevant intergovernmental bodies should review the programme performance report. In accordance with that resolution, the Committee may wish to consider the programme performance for the biennium 1994-1995 for Conference Services.

6. Adoption of the report